The culture and language of the people of Nakhchivan, Tabriz and Maragheh in Travel literature of Evliya Çelebi

Mortaza Firuzi ¹, Sanaz Rahkarfarshi ², Hossein Hassanpashaei ³

¹ MA Graduate of Political Geography at Ferdowsi University, Mashhad, Iran.
² PhD student at Faculty of Art History, Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey.
³ PhD student at Faculty of Political Science, Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey.

Abstract

The travel book of Evliya Çelebi is a book written by Evliya Çelebi, an Ottoman Turk traveler, in which he gathered 40 years of his travels experience through Ottoman Empire and other neighboring territories in 10 volumes. Evliya Çelebi had also traveled to Iran twice through which he explains in vol. 2 and 4 of his book. He explains Iran Azerbaijan cities in vol. 2 of his book and has given some rather useful information about them in terms of their culture. In this article, so far we examined both analytically and descriptively the notes Evliya Çelebi has denoted about Nakhchivan, Tabriz and Maragheh. Our effort, due to significance of this travel literature which provides us with some brand new information about geography, history, language and people’s way of living during that period, was to inform readers (Persian) of inferences and necessary contemplations regarding to the original text of the book.

Keywords: Travel book, Travel literature, Evliya Çelebi, Tabriz, Nakhchivan, Maragheh.
1. Introduction
Evliya Çelebi, a great Turkish explorer, is the author of the important travel book which is sometimes regarded as “The Explorer’s History”. He was born in Istanbul in Lunar year 1020. His family, whose descent reaches to those of Ahmed Yasavi, was among the immigrants who after the conquest of Istanbul entered there and was originally from Kütahya. He learned Arabic, Persian, and music at the school and later broke into the Palace of Ottoman Empire. He spent 40 years of his life on traveling within the Ottoman Empire and some other neighboring territories. (Diyanat, 2001, p. 4138) Evliya Çelebi traveled all through the Middle East, the Caucasus, Sudan, the Arabian Desert, northern Ethiopia, European Roman, Albania, Romania, Hungary, Vienna, Germany, the Netherlands, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dalmachya, southern Russia and all Arab areas and recorded every single things seen during this period. He died in the year 1682 in Istanbul but his grave site isn’t clear to the visitors. (Wikifeqh, 2015) Evliya Çelebi’s travel book is the most significant and detailed travel literature ever written during Ottoman Empire, and it has been written in the second half of the lunar 11th century. It contains memories of the author from the large areas which sometimes happened to be within the empire or beyond it. (Soleimani, 2001, p. 165) The travel book of Evliya Çelebi, which is the result of 40 years of his experience, traveling within and beyond the Ottoman Empire, has got its gravity in 10 volumes. He explains Iran during the Safavid Dynasty in vol. 2 & 4 of his book. In this study, we examined cultural aspects, religious sides and especially ethnic and linguistic point of view in the three forgiven cities which have been discussed in vol. 2 of this travel book.

2. Method
In this research, we will examine some facts about language and culture of Azerbaijan people in three major cities of this area; Nakhchivan, Tabriz and Maragheh which have been explained in vol. 2 of Evliya Çelebi’s book. In order to elucidate, fulfill and analyze the author’s annotations (which are originally written in Ottoman language), In this paper, we employed analytic and descriptive method and the data collection was done through library work by referring to the original texts in Ottoman language and also other related books, papers or internet resources. The main research question is as follows: “What was the language and the correlated culture of Tabriz, Nakhchivan and Maragheh? And what was the two Islamic common languages’ position (Arabic & Persian Dari) among the people of that era?

3. Findings
3.1. Nakhchivan
3.1.1. Language:
Evliya Çelebi in his travel book and during his travel to Nakhchivan, introduces its people as follows: (The original text is of course in Ottoman language which is shown in figure.1)
“Peasant serfs and the people of this city speak their own native language but mystics and poets and its elegant courtiers converse in their old languages like Pahlavi and Mongolian in a very elegant and tactful way. Citizens also imitate them and speak elegantly. First, peasant language, Dari, Persian, Ghazi and Pahlavi with their own special dominant
areas will be explained. Second, the deceased Ibn Kemal in his philological work “The Subtleties of Verities” explicates Persian as follows:

« قال في تفسير الديلمي سال رسول الله صل الله عليه و سلم عن ميكانيل عليه السلام هل يقول الله تعالى شياً بالفارسية؟ قال نعم يا رسول الله في صفح ابراهيم (عليه السلام) جه كم با ابن مشت خاك ستكماران جز أنك پیام. قال النبي عليه السلام من طعن حركه الغازى فيهه كافر بالله و قال النبي عليه السلام لسان اهل الجنه العربيه والفارسية »

In this section, Evliya Çelebi referred Pahlavi and Mongolian as the old languages, that regarding the Sassanid reign in this area for so long and Pahlavi’s old being and also Mongolian presence since Ilkhanids era, doesn’t seem illogical.

The important issue here to mention is the peasant language (Dehghani). Some of the researchers assert that peasant language cannot be counted as a legitimate language and that, like Shahnameh says, it must be celebrated as a class of people that are defined against the terms Turkish and Arabic. However, this hypothesis can hardly be true, since Evliya Çelebi referred Pahlavi (Sassanid language), e.t to some extent, the same with peasant language in Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh, along the same with that of Dehghani. So needless to attribute it to that of Pahlavi; and even it has been mentioned along with Persian. On the other hand, Dehghan in Ottoman literature means peasant or villager. Keeping in an account that Evliya Çelebi in the rest of his journey as he had mentioned before, didn’t talk too much about Nakhchivan, the only annotation here is a quotation of Turkman language (original text is written in Ottoman):

“Terekemeh, Koukdolan and Mongolians all have different accents that they all will be discussed in details in their own places”

And in a place around Nakhchivan has mentioned some exact words from its people in Turkman like: “عطمانلي كليميش (an Ottoman has come)”. Considering the above mentioned explanations, Peasant language can possibly have three recognizations. It can be either Turkman (Turkman in Evliya Çelebi’s book is quite distinguishable from Turkish language and even Mongolian can be separated from these two but only in one place in defining a race around the Azerbaijan Republic he mentioned them as Mongolian Turks and referred Mongolian the same with Turkish. And in the rest in the same page he named 600 Turkman villages. Yet, he talked quite differently about Turkish and Turkman and has never referred them the same.), or an old language which has been abolished or obsoleted, or it could be attributed to that of colloquial language common among peasants. (Sadeghi, 2003, pp. 6-7)

However, in the part that he explained Tabriz city, in the appellation of Tabriz he stated that it is called “Taber riz” in peasant language that Turkman possibility here is also high, since in case of Tabriz people, they mostly are among Turkmans. By the way, designation of this language seems far too much difficult.

In the following, Çelebi referred Dari completely different from Persian. It is assumed that what is meant by Dari here can be Tati language. Çelebi in Tabriz appellation regarded this city as “Tiuriz” in Dari language. Additionally, he stated that this pronunciation is also different from what Persian people call this city e.t Tabriz. And given that nowadays Tati and Kurds peoples call Tabriz as “Turiz” (Encyclopaediaislamica, 2016) which is too similar to that of aforementioned Dari pronunciation, could be the case to reinforce the hypothesis which Dari can be the same as Tati in this travel book.

And more lately in naming the Nakhchivan languages, he included Ghazi language. Ghazi language is sometimes recalled as “Tazik(Arabic)” and also at times, “vague”. Yet, all
of these hypotheses do not seem to be true, owing to the fact that Ghazi is one of the Indo-European and a subgroup of Indo-Iranian languages. It still is being actively used in the center of Iran, in Esfahan province, in a very small village on eastern side of Kashan with a population of about 7030 people. (The ethnologue, 2015)

Subsequently, Evliya Çelebi cites a quotation from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that regards Dari and Arabic as celestial languages. Verifying this quotation’s validity is up to the specialized fields of religion. But as it has been mentioned earlier Persian Dari is looked on as one of the first-level languages of Islamic civilization. It has been taken into account as a religious language among Iranian and Anatolian Turks and has always been dignified by all the Turkish descendants like Anatolians and Iranians and so on.

Figure 1: The original text of the book from the people of Nakhchivan in Ottoman language. (Çelebi, 1889, p. 238)

Figure 2: The original text of the book from Turkmen, Kokdolaghs and other accents in Ottoman language. (Çelebi, 1889, p. 239)

3.2. Tabriz

3.2.1. Language of Tabriz people

Evliya Çelebi in the second volume of his travel literature, during the time that he stayed in Tabriz, has given rather comprehensive information about this city and even has used terms like “Seductive Tabriz” or “My heart belongs to Azerbaijan” to describe Tabriz and Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, due to some religious conflicts between Ottoman Empire and Safavid Dynasty, there at times some inappropriate language can be found. Evliya Çelebi in
the proper part of his book has stated language of Tabriz people as follows (original text in Ottoman language is shown in fig. 3):

“Most of the Tabrizian intellectuals speak Persian but Tere and Afsharkouh’s Dolaghs speak with a different accent that you’ll see some below:

(He/she is memorable to me) هزه تانمه مشم (I didn’t know) منمچون خاطر مانده اولوپدور
(He/she was angry at me) دار (I haven’t seen yet) بارونچشم (I became an enemy) دارم اولوپدور
(Take the coming slave) دار لدم (I missed) پارونچشم (Bring on the wine) بکا اینجنمشدر

(He/she was memorable to me) هزه تانمه مشم
(He/she missed) پارونچشم

It has been mentioned correctly that the language of Tabriz’s intellectuals was Persian. It seems the reason behind this is the religious nature of Persian language for these people; considering that, the first religious language for Turkish people was Persian Dari, and after that Arabic had its second importance. You can find its reason in the war between Turks and Muslim Persians before Arabic Muslims. This is quite distinctive in religious and literary lexis. In Turkish, for instance “Namaz” is used instead of Arabic word: “Salat” and “Ab – Dast” is used instead of “Vozu” and so on. (Pekolcay, 1994, s. 62) This is why Persian Dari along with Arabic are referred as religious languages for people, and other intellectuals and scholars or penmen after Islam wrote majority of their books and papers, which are considered in the field of Islamic civilization, in either Persian or Arabic. Later on gradually Turkish was included as a legitimate language along with other Islamic civilization languages.

To complete the latter subject, Evliya Çelebi remarks that language of other people are Turkman, who were mainly Turkmans like Afsharids (a group of Turks who helped Shah Ismail I form the Safavid reign. Furthermore, Nader Shah was also a member of this group who were sent to Khorasan.) And Dolaghs (Turkmans who are known after the name of Gook Doolagh and at times Ajam Gook Doolagh which means Qizilbash Turkmans (Baybal , 2001, ss. 79-88)). The more in the following he talks and gives some examples of the accent of Turkman tribes, mainly Afsharids, which is also similar to Azerbaijani, and even some of them have kept their functionality in the language of Azerbaijan for time being.

It is worth noting that Turkman language in Evliya Çelebi’s travel book is the same as Azerbaijani. (Gülsevin, Fall, 2012, s. 107)

As a matter of fact, even Ottomans has often used the word “Turk” to refer to Ottomans and Ottoman language than using it for addressing Iranian Turks and other similar places. Likewise, within their own territory this term along with Qizilbash has mostly used to address Alavids; in fact, they every so often had some acute divisions with Ottomans.
3.2.2 Description of Nobles and Aristocrats

Evliya Çelebi in the following has mentioned some tribes and their associated religions. (The real original text is shown in fig. 4)

“There in the city you can confront with some nobles and aristocrats which are the followers of deviant cults; however, nations like Afsharids, Dumdumus, Dumyul’us, Khelejanis, Terekemeh and Koukdolaghs are excessively more and have earned pots of money and became filthy rich people by trading that are all among Shiites.”

In this section, Evliya Çelebi has mentioned some Turkman clans, mostly Qizilbash, with the name of “different clans”, in view of the fact that all the mentioned clans are from Turkmans. Consequently, according to the aforementioned explanations over culture and language of the people, in that period of time Tabriz people, in terms of religion, were almost Alavis and Shiites; and in terms of ethnicity, they were mostly Turkmans (Qizilbash). Literati, from whatsoever tribes or clans, were firstly speaking and writing bilingually in two first-level languages at that time which were Persian and Arabic, and secondly had the same trend in Turkish language (both epic and elegy).

3.3 Language of Maragheh city

Evliya Çelebi in his travel book introduces people of Maragheh city as such: (the original text is in Ottoman language, fig. 5)

“Like Caucasians, people of Maragheh have got whitey skin. They are nice people, gregorious, and with some amicable, hypocritical look. However, nearly most of them are clandestinely Hanafi followers who tend to be Sufi as well. Their female society mostly converse in Pahlavi, but among them are eloquent and exquisite speakers too. This area consists of eight regions: Sarajon, Banajon, Darjarot, Kardol, Hashtrood, Bahand, Ankoran and Qiziloran. These regions have for a nigh on 100 villages and their vecinity have for a nigh on 500-600 villages. They also have 60 bigger villages such as: Jam’ali, Khanli, Emarat and Hamamli, Charshi and Bazarli and so on. They also have about 7 full-operative fortresses. In case I had to explain all of them separately, it would possibly be another distinct book. Therefore, I abandoned this city...”

In this part of the book, Evliya Çelebi has described Maragheh city. He, it seems, has found it adequate to only describe some fortresses in general and as he stated, describing all the
fortresses would be time consuming and beyond the possibilities of this book. This might be because of the author’s dogmatic religious views toward other religions that he called their people hypocritical and explained their religion in that uncouth way. This might have been uneasy for him to admit, since he clearly stated that they were clandestinely Hanafi followers. In case of the language of Maragheh people and grasping their intention, one can conclude that they were speaking Turkman. But, considering the language of female society which he explained as Pahlavi, we can infer that due to Sassanid reign in this area for ages, it cannot be that extraordinary; nevertheless, there, now and then, can be found that some writers exclude this “female society” and consciously or unconsciously attribute it to all the people of Maragheh or in some rare cases to all the people of Azerbaijan!

Figure 5: The discription of people of Maragheh in Evliya Çelebi’s travel book in original Ottoman text. (Çelebi , 1889, p. 269)

4. Conclusion
Considering all the investigations and inferences from Evliya Çelebi’s Travel Literature in Nakhchivan, Tabriz and Maragheh, as well as scrutinizing their cultural and lingual features, there, it seems, his assertions are not that far to be believed. Because by examining some other resources and the implications we obtained from the book, in terms of language, Persian and Arabic were two initial as scientific and logical languages for the people of this area and then Turkman (Azerbaijani Turkish) was both the common and prevalent and like other languages such as Pahlavi, Ghazi, Mongolian etc. considered to be the third language spoken in this large area. According to Evliya Çelebi’s declarations, in terms of religion, it also seems that despite all due respect he has got toward people of this area, due to profound religious disagreements between Ottoman Empire and Safavid Dynasty and his own dogmatic views toward other religions, he didn’t seem to be taking the cultivated or sophisticated way. So, once in a while, there can be seen some clear presumptuous words about this area’s religions.

By the way, Evliya Çelebi’s Travel Literature as a Muslim explorer and traveler and who was completely familiar with regional exclusive languages, especially Arabic, Persian, and
Azerbaijani Turkish, has its own significance to be counted as a legitimate source which gives rather brand new information from the area. One had better only use directly the untouched sources printed in Ottoman original text during that time to investigate and analyze. Because otherwise, in case of using manipulated sources which there might have been made some conscious or unconscious mistakes in translation, you may be misled and consequently your researches might get some rather radical deviations in results.
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